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THE Necessity of Keeping still unto THE *Ordinances of Religion*, Prayer, Hearing the Word, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Set forth in a

SERMON

Preached in the Countrey on *Acts* VI. 4.

Wherein also is laid open, and manifested the Errour of those People (commonly call'd *Quakers*) who do neglect the two latter.

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least Commandments, and teach Men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven, Mat. 5. 19.

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But we will give our ſelves continually to Prayer, and to the Miniſtry of the Word, Acts VI. 4.

IN order to ſerve God *unto the ſaving of the Soul*, and to continue and Perſevere in Godlineſs and well doing unto our Lives End, It is neceſſary to keep ſtill unto the Ordinances of Religion; I do mean, the ſeveral Acts and Parts of Worſhip, as *Prayer*, *Hearing the Word*, *Baptiſm* and the *Lords Supper*, as they are uſed in the reformed Churches, By the Congregations and Aſſemblies of Gods People, *Who Worſhip him in Spirit and in Truth.*

The neceſſity of keeping ſtill unto them, In order to make a continuing and perſevering work of it, will hence appear, becauſe it is certain that each of us, and every one of us ſhall ſo long Perſevere in the Worſhip and Service of the Lord, according as we uſe the means of Perſeverance. Now theſe Ordinances are the means of Grace and Perſeverance, which laſt is a well grounded Hope of Glory.

Suppoſe a Man who hath been many years advancing in the Chriſtian Life, another *Mnaſon*, an Old Diſciple, who hath come up to the higher attainments of Chriſtianity, and ſome degrees towards Perfection, (for this is the meaning of that Commandment of Chriſt unto his followers, *Be ye Perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is Perfect*; That we ſhould ſtill endeavour and make towards Perfection, although it is impoſſible for Man here in the Body to be ſo perfect as God is. Suppoſe one that were Dead to ſin and mortified to wordly Affections, Who hath all faith and all Knowledge of Spiritual things; If this Perſon ſhould, as he might if he would, but God forbid that any one ſhould make the Experiment, Neglect for ſome while to offer up any Prayer at all, hearing or read-

ing of the word, he would have no consideration of his ways, nor admit any thoughts of God, but he leads such a kind of life, as the wicked, sensual, wordly and ungodly Man doth for a Week or a Month together; Even this formerly Godly and Gracious Soul would become such an one himself, as the other is hardened, stupid, backward, unaffected, and in a manner Reprobate to every good word and work.

And my People are bent to back sliding from me, Hos. 11. 7. For there is a deceitfulness of Heart, and Corruption of Nature from within, and also the Temptations from without (as all things are full of Temptation) which would soon betray us into sin and forgetfulness of God, unless prevented by those Means and Ordinances which himself hath instituted. What the Apostle saith in another case may be applicable unto this. *For the Sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the Grass and the Flower thereof fadeth, and the Grace of the fashion of it Perisheth.* So likewise should we be apt to fade away, even in our Good ways. For the manifold Sollicitations and Objects of the World, that Men pleasing, the Allurements of Company, are all apt to draw or turn aside from God and the thing that Good is: But the keeping still unto the Ordinances of Religion, doth remind and bring us unto them again, which if we did not resort unto, *our Back slidings would be increased*, till they did come to an utter and final Apostacy, as we may perceive by the Working and Tendencies of our own fleshy and corrupt Nature, as also from the many Ensamples of others, who have *Forsaken God and Loved this present World.*

It can hardly be expressed how averse Mans Nature is unto God, and to the things of his Kingdom; how hard it is, to *cleave unto him with full purpose of Heart*, according as he requires, and how easy it is to fall away and turn aside. It was just now quoted what God saith in *Hosea*, *My People are bent to Backsliding*: He doth not there so much mean the sinners and ungodly, but his Saints and Servants. *My People* have a Pronenes and Liableness unto this thing of *Back sliding*. Look within your selves as ye read this, and do ye not perceive somewhat thereof in your own selves. Which the word of God doth mention and take notice of, in order to Caution and Arm your minds

minds againſt the ſame. *For Iſrael* (that is a word, ſignifying his own People again) *Slideth back as a Backſliding heiſer*, Hoſ. 4. 16. But beſides thoſe little inclinations towards Backſliding in us, Man in his Natural condition is altogether addicted to ſin and falling away. *But they like Men have tranſgreſſed the Covenant*, Hoſ. 6. 7. It was like them, and ſuch as could be expected from them. Now a Backſliding is as it were a little trip, and is not altogether ſo bad as a fall, or a falling back, or a falling away. Or a turning aſide, or out of the way, or a going back. But here is to be obſerved, that the Word of God takes notice of every leaſt *Backſliding*; for it hinders or retards, or they do not go on ſo well in the way to Heaven as the Lord would have them, and guide them and hold them up by his right hand. We ſay in the Proverb, *It is a good Horſe that never ſtumbles*, but it is a very good Horſe that never ſo much as trips; for there is hardly ſuch an one to be found. And ſo it will be in the Account and Eſtimation of God, that Man or Woman walks well enough in his way, who doth never ſtumble or fall therein; and if when he falls, he doth get up again. Our Gracious God calls upon *Iſrael*, *Return for thou haſt fallen by thine Iniquity*. Yea, if they are gone back or aſide, if they will ſtill return again into the right way, he will accept thereof. *Thus ſaith the Lord, ſhall they fall and not ariſe? Shall they turn away and not return?* Jer. 8. 4. And ſo when the Creature is walking and moving on in the way of his Commandments, when there are Backſlidings, God doth in no wiſe allow thereof, but complains of it. Although he would not altogether diſcourage his Poor Creature neither. So that *the Law of God is Perfect, converting the Soul*. It doth chalk out the higheſt degrees and meaſures of perfection, altho Mans Impotency, weakneſs and feebleneſs doth not attain unto it. That is a Good Son and Servant indeed, who can ſay in Truth unto God our Heavenly Father, and not ſo much by way of Boaſting unto their fellow Creatures, *Loe theſe many years do I ſerve thee, neither tranſgreſſed I at any time thy Commandment*, Luk. 15. 29. Such a thing perhaps may be poſſible as to our Fathers or Maſters according to the fleſh: But *David* prays by the Spirit when he ſaith, *And enter not into Judgment with thy Servant; for*

in thy ſight ſhall no Man living be juſtified, Pſal. 145. 2. When God comes to enter into Judgment, and to bring to remembrance all the ſteps of our courſe here on Earth, I believe there will not be found any Man ever living (whatever ſome pretend unto or ſay, but herein they are guilty of falſhood, which is a fall) except Jeſus Chriſt the righteous who was more then a Man) who was not guilty of ſome fall, or at leaſt of a Backſliding; yea, of ſeveral and of many. But they will be pronounced to have been the beſt Sons and Servants, who in their courſe through this Earth, had the feweſt Falls, and the feweſt Backſlidings, and in the leaſt inſtances. My Buſineſs in my Preaching unto ye is, to direct ye all a long ſo to walk that ye may pleaſe the Lord. Accordingly, I having warrant and Ground from his Word ſo to do, I teſtify againſt all Backſlidings, yea, and the leaſt Backſlidings. O do not that abominable thing which I hate. Nor yet do ye give way willingly unto the leaſt Backſlidings, which the Lord is diſpleaſed with and doth not approve of. Though after all your Circumſpection, and taking heed which ſhould be yet more then it is conſidering how things ſtand; ye have fallen into ſome Backſlidings in your Paſt Life, and it is odds, but ye will fall into more before ye die. Though in Gods Gods Name and for your own Souls Good, do whatever ye can to avoid them. *This I teach and affirm conſtantly*, and I do here put ye in mind of the Apoſtles Exhortation and command, *And having done all to ſtand.* I ſay again; *And having done all to ſtand, aud let him that ſtandeth take heed leaſt he fall.* I will go on to add yet further, if any ſhould be *overtaken with a fault*, or fall into a ſin, let him cry mightily to God for Pardon and Strengthening Grace: Put forth all thy Strength and Power to get out of it, and riſe up again as ſoon as ever thou canſt. *Thus ſaith the Lord, Shall they fall and not ariſe? Shall they turn away and not return?* Temptations do beſet Good and Godly People, as well as the mixt Multitude of the World. Yea, rather Satan is moſt buſy with the firſt, and ſerves greater ends upon them if his Temptations ſhould take effect, he having already *taken the latter ſort Captive at his will.* There is a like old corrupt Nature in all, although it is kept under and ſubdued in regenerate People; which doth actuate and prevail and rule all in all, in the Children of Diſ-

obedience.

obedience. *And the Lord ſaid unto* Moſes, *Go get thee down, for thy People which thou broughteſt out of the Land of* Egypt *have corrupted themſelves. They have turned aſide quickly out of the way which I have commanded them, and made a Molten Calf and Worſhipped it*, Exod. 32. 7. And ſo when the Lord writeth up the People of the ſeveral Generations and Countries. He ſhall count and rehearſe at the laſt day, how they have turned aſide quickly out of the way which he had commanded them. Not only in making and ſacrificing unto other Gods (which is a moſt grievous evil and abominable Idolatry) but in the Breach and Tranſgreſſion of the other Commandments alſo. He did ſet them aright once and again, but they would and did quickly turn aſide out of the way which he had commanded them. As we read or hear of this in others, we are to remember and take heed, we are to fear and watch; for we have the ſame or like hearts; which if they do not break out quickly into actual turning aſide, yet we are ſubject unto, and it is poſſible, we may quickly fall into the ſame. There is a Pronenes, woulding, and Inclination to the ſame ſin and evil. *Know ye not that the Spirit which dwelleth in us*, (He ſpeaketh there in the Perſon and behalf of Chriſtians) *luſteth to envy*. Now when one luſteth to a thing he would fain be at it, but he knows not whither it would be beſt for him. He hath ſome looking back towards *Sodom*. *Remember Lots Wife*. For we are forbidden, even theſe ſame luſtings and covetings after worldly things, and ſecret deſires after thoſe things which are not to be had without the hazard of the ſeekers thereafter for all Eternity. *So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain, which taketh away the Life of the owners thereof*, Prov. 1. 19. Like as *David* longed, and ſaid, *Oh that One would give me to drink of the Water of the Well of Bethlehem, which is by the Gate*. Now as to all theſe, the Word of God which is very pure, doth forbid all thoſe Luſtings and Covetings, and Concupiſcence. It requires to cruſh the Cockatrice Egg, that it break not forth into a viper; *To daſh the little ones againſt the Stones*; Not only to abſtain from all appearance of Evil, but to nip and deſtroy it in its riſe and beginning, when it doth in the leaſt appear above Ground. *O Jeruſalem waſh thine heart*, (there is the

Fountain and Spring, and it is good going to the bottom) *from wickedneſs that thou mayeſt be ſaved,* (By this it appears, that there is more requiſite and neceſſary to ſalvation then many People are aware of) *How long ſhall thy vain Thoughts lodge within thee?* Jer. 4. 14. *How long ſhall it be e're they attain to Innocency?* Hoſ. 8. 5. By which place it appears, that it is the mind of God that there ſhould be a preſſing forwards, and a going towards, and an endeavour after Innocency; Though if one had the Tongue of Men and Angels: If he had all knowledge and utterance in the Law of God and Heavenly things, how long do ye think he might Preach to a Congregation e're They attain to Innocency, conſidering Men as they are. I ſuppoſe, he might Preach all his own life long, and to their lives end before they all attain to Innocency. Though withal, if he is faithful in his miniſtry, to which the Divine Bleſſing and Promiſe is Annexed, it will be Inſtrumental towards the making ſome therein, *a People prepared for the Lord.*

But Jeſus did not commit himſelf unto them, becauſe he knew all Men, and needed not that any ſhould teſtify of Man; for he knew what was in Man, John 2. 23, 24. Now we learn from *John* 1. 1. That Jeſus was the Word of God, and the *Word was God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made* Man himſelf was created and made by the *Word.* So that by the rule of conſequences, if all Men were Created by the Word, as they were, then of neceſſity the Word muſt know all men, and know what is in man. There went no more towards the creating the whole World, and all things therein, than God's ſaying, *Let it be ſo* (which is his Word), *and it was ſo.* As the Word of God did create us at firſt in a litteral and material ſenſe, ſo the ſame Word is to make us *New Creatures*; to create us again in a ſpiritual ſenſe; to make us *live unto God for ever and ever.* And in order to that it knows all men, and knows what is in man; and needs not that any one ſhould teſtify of him, for it knows enough of it ſelf. The Commandments, Rules and Directions are given in that wiſe, according as Man is Prone Subject and Inclinable unto. There are more then a Thouſand Inſtances of this, throughout the Book of the Lord. But I will recite one or two, *Only take heed to thy ſelf and keep thy*

Soul

Soul diligently, leaſt thou forget the things which thine Eyes have ſeen, Take heed unto your ſelves, leaſt ye forget the Covenant of the Lord your God, Deut. 4. 9, 23. The Holy Ghoſt, by giving this double caution in this Chapter doth denote and ſhew forth, what Men are apt and ſubject unto, even to the forgetfulneſs of the Works of God and of the words of his Law, for themſelves to live according unto, and to obey it, and therefore he warns them againſt it: Now the ſeveral Acts and Parts of Worſhip are in a manner Viſible, and alſo they put in continual mind both of the works of God, and of the words of God. And for this reaſon, beſides his own Command of Enjoyning them, they are to be retained and reſorted unto all the days of our Life, whilſt we are here in the Body.

O Ephraim, *What ſhall I do unto thee?* *O* Judah, *What ſhall I do unto thee? For thy Goodneſs is as the morning Cloud, and as the Earthly Dew it goeth away*, Hoſ. 6. 4. As it is written, *Jeſus Chriſt ſpake thus unto* Philip, *Proving him, for he himſelf knew what he would do*, John 6. 6. Even ſo God the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, doth here ask the ſame Queſtion doubly over, proving his People, or putting them to it; for he himſelf knoweth what he hath to do and would do herein; How, that when their *Goodneſs is as the morning Cloud, and as the Early Dew it paſſeth away*; He hath provided that it ſhould be renewed and come and ſucceed again, even by the Ordinances of Religion, which himſelf hath ordained and inſtituted. I have ſeveral times thought, how that in the long days in the hot and ſultry weather, when is the ſcorching Sun, How the wiſdom of God doth then provide for the Earth. For whereas, at this time of the Year, there is little or no Rain for ſeveral weeks together; If it were not for that Dew which God doth then ſend every Night and Early in the Morning, what would the Earth come unto? The moſt fruitful Ground would become like the Barren Mountains, and the *Waſte howling Wilderneſs*. The Heaven that is over our head *would be Braſs*, and the Earth that is under us, *would be Iron*, Deut. 28. 23. There would be little or no Graſs to be ſeen. But the Sun in its full might and ſtrength would ſcorch and burn it up. But now, (bleſſed, and ever bleſſed be our God for it) by means of the Dew which

which commonly tarries on the Earth, until the Ninth or Tenth hour in the morning, It is refreshed instead of Rain; and thus it comes to pass, that it is neither barren nor unfruitful. The observation is common, that in Cloudy weather, or when it will Rain that day, there is usually less or no foregoing Dew. The Knowledge and Wisdom of God, seeing that there will not be altogether so much need of it then, and accordingly he doth so proportion it out, who doth all things in Number, Weight and Measure. *O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all.* And so even now Thou, who *upholdest all things by the Word of thy Power*, In wisdom dost thou govern and dispose of all things throughout the whole World. O that when People walk out early in the morning, and see the Dew lie as the *Small Rain upon the tender Herb, and as Showers upon the Grass*, (Every little drop whereof doth more Good, and therein is more valuable then so many Pearls) would eye and see the Lord therein, and Praise the Lord for his Goodness, and declare his wonders unto the Children of Men. That they would further make known a Spiritual use and improvement hereof, as the whole Face of the Earth unless for this Dew, would be like unto a Path or Road which Man or Beast continually goes on, or at least it would be barren and unfruitful. Even so in like manner Mine own heart, and the other hearts of the reasonable Inhabitants of this Earth, unless it were for the Dew of the Word and of Prayer, would become barren and unfruitful in the work of the Lord, and in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But on the other and better hand, the constant Dew of the Word and of Prayer (if we do not put them from us but have recourse thereunto) for the Lord doth hold them forth and Command the Inhabitants of the Earth to use them, and receive the benefit of them; If these be sought and had daily; If this *Knowledge and Godliness* (which last includes both the Word and Prayer, and these *things be in you and abound* (there is Great Emphasis in that Word, full measure and running over, which teaches us that we should do it still more and more. *Every Branch that beareth Fruit, he purgeth that it may bring forth more Fruit*, John 15. 2. *They make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the Knowledge*

ledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. 1. 8. Who saith, *Herein is my Father Glorified that ye bear much Fruit, so shall ye be my Disciples*, John 15. 8. But as without the Dew or Rain, there would be no Fruit or Grass, so without hearing or reading the Word and Prayer, there would be no Fruit brought forth unto God. And if God is Glorified when his reasonable Creatures bring forth Fruit, then by the Rule of Contraries he is dishonoured when they bring forth no Fruit, or when he fails and is disappointed in his Expectation; *When I looked that it should bring forth Grapes, and it brought forth Wild Grapes.* And what is the consequent of all? Poor Creatures, the greatest loss will redound to themselves at the last, altho' now they do not throughly consider thereof. *And now go to, I will tell you what I will do to my Vineyard, it shall be trodden down, it shall not be Pruned nor digged, but there shall come up Briars and Thorns. I will also command the Clouds, that they Rain no Rain upon it.* For the Earth which *drinketh in the Rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth Herbs, meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth Blessing from God; But that which beareth Thorns and Briars is rejected, and is nigh unto Cursing, whose end is to be burned*, Heb. 6. 7, 8. As the Earth drinketh in the Rain, so Almighty God doth require of the Inhabitants thereof, that they should drink in, hear, and receive his word Preached.

And he having in his Eternal Providence opened a Door in this place where we now are, he doth require of the Inhabitants of this Town and Neighbourhood to come for to hear the same. And I declare to them all that he will call them to an Account for their refusal, or neglect to do the same. I warn them beforehand, that then the false Surmises and Reproaches of some concerning the Minister, nor yet will the vain and frivolous excuses of others avail, as to that God with whom we have all do. As to those false Surmises and Reproaches, they might do as He did in reference to *Hannah*, whom he first supposed drunken, and afterwards enquired further, and then he understood and said, *The Lord grant thy Petition*: So they might come to my self immediately, to be throughly satisfied of their present mis-understandings. And let their own Consciences try, bear Witness and Judge, by hearing of the same; whither the *Way of God, is not taught here in Truth.* Here

There is a very near reſemblance and ſimilitude to the Word preached unto the reaſonable Inhabitants thereof, and to the Rain or Dew deſcending upon the Earth; for as the Rain makes the Earth fruitful, ſo the Word preached, if it is drinked in, as the *Earth drinketh in the Rain*, if it is *mixed with Faith in them that hear it*, will make men and women meet and prepared for God, and meet to receive a Bleſſing from God. *My Doctrine ſhall drop as the Rain, my Speech ſhall diſtil as the Dew, as the ſmall Rain upon the tender Herb, and as the Showers upon the Graſs, Deut.* 32. 2. Otherwiſe the manifold Solicitations and Objects of this World, would be apt to ſcorch, and make us fade away, even in aur good ways. But that the Doctrine, and Speech of the Word (like *Rain, Dew, ſmall Rain* and *Showers*), whereby alſo is to be ſeen, that the Word ſhould not be only preached once and away, but day after day, and Sabbath after Sabbath; for there is a daily ſucceſſion of Dew, or of Rain, ſmall Rain or Showers, to do moſt good: and then it is when the Word is conſtantly preached, and conſtantly attended unto, and received in; then it renders the Vineyard meet for our God. If his Word falls upon the *Duſt of the Wilderneſs*, (it is *Jeremiah*'s Phraſe) or upon *ſtony and dry places*, *Mat.* 13. 5, 6. (I wiſh that the hearts of none who ſhall hear or read this be that Duſt of the Wilderneſs, or ſtony and dry places) then it may ſeem loſt and ineffectual, not for want of Worth and Excellency in it ſelf (for it is the ſame Rain that falls there, as that which falls upon good ground), but the Incapacity is in the Subject. It doth *not profit, not being mixed with Faith in them that hear it:* Or they ſuffer it to run off again, as Uſeleſs Water. They do not drink it in, as the Earth drinks in the Rain. O that ſome of ye here preſent, would drink in this Sermon. Take my word for it, if ye would drink it in, it would abide longer with ye, and do ye more good than that drink which periſheth in the Draught; or that ſtrong drink which if immoderately taken in, *ſhall be bitter to them that drink it.* Not ſo much as to thoſe Qualms of Conſcience, or Head-Ach, which do quickly enſue thereupon. But the worſt Bitterneſs will be in the End, when they muſt *taſte the Bitterneſs of Death*, and thence be called to Judgment to receive *a due*

Reward

Reward for the Sin and Evil of their Drunkenneſs in the days of their fleſh. I would have ye drink that in not one drop further then barely for Thirſt and neceſſary Refreſhment. But if ye would taſte, and drink in ſome of thoſe words as are written, by God's bleſſing, and improvement thereon, it may become in ye *a well of water ſpringing up unto Eternal Life*, *John* 4. 14.

In a dry Summer, that is good and convenient ground which lies next to a River or Brook, or Fountains which are perpetually running and ſpringing; and when there are apt Floodgates and Inſtruments, to let the water over the ground and drain it again; This ſupplies and makes up from beneath, for the Dew and Rain which comes from above. And ſo it is convenient in dwelling houſes, to keep water always by one. Even ſo we ſhould be always furniſhed, (unto which the word Preached doth help us) with the like Spiritual Water, as it deſcends from above, in the Dew and Rain of the Ordinances. And when we have drank it in, we ſhould not let it run through but ſtop and keep it there, that it may be turned and converted into our own Moiſture. *For the word is nigh thee, even in thine heart.* See to it well, that by Pondering and Remembrance of what thou heareſt or readeſt, *Theſe words that I Command thee, thou ſhalt lay up in thy heart*; That it may become as it were a repoſitory of gracious Words and Divine Truths. Which like Pools or Rivers of Water will refreſh and ſupply thy need at any time. *For they drank of that Spiritual Rock that followed them* (in the Margent there it is, went with them) *and that Rock was Chriſt*, 1 Cor. 10. 4. So that it is to have Chriſt, who is the word, formed within them; that he may follow and go with them whitherſoever they go, or whereſoever they are. This will be yet a more laſting and abiding thing then the Early Dew or the deſcending Rain, for that is not always. But to have the *Spiritual Rock following us*, or going with us, this is at Midday and Afternoon, and at thoſe times when there will be no Rain. The word is not, nor can be well Preached always; but this ſupplies and helps for that in the Intervals and ſpaces of time between it, even to have a Spiritual drink always within us, and to have a Spiritual Rock following and going with us, which Rock is Chriſt, out of

which we may draw and drink at any time, whenſoever we will.

As one of the Antients ſaid, *Nothing is ſo worthy of God, as the Salvation of Mankind*; So it is a moſt wonderful thing to conſider, how he hath conſulted, contrived and provided all things for it. In his word) eſpecially, and alſo in his other doings and diſpenſations towards the Children of Men. Happy, thrice happy, and only happy are thoſe his Servants and Creatures, who know (that is not all) but alſo comply therewith. *That as deep calleth unto deep, at the noiſe of thy Water Spouts*, Pſal. 42. 7. So one ordinance doth follow another, and one thing is appendant, connected and ſucceeds another; and all to that great end, to bring about the common Salvation of Mankind, as if God would never let us alone until he hath brought us unto Heaven. On the one hand he is wanting in no means to ſet us forward; and then again, he is not wanting in any thing to keep us on continually a-going. Yea, he hath ordained further, that we ſhould here on Earth live the life of Heaven before we come to Heaven. *Bleſſed are they that dwell in thy Houſe, they will be ſtill praiſing thee*, *Pſal.* 84. 4. And he hath ordered things in that manner, that we may be always a doing the work of God.

And whereas here ſome would be apt to think that this would breed Tireſomneſs, he hath again ſo ordered the matter, by thoſe Ordinances of Religion and Worſhip, which he hath inſtituted, that they who herein wait on the Lord, ſhould *renew their ſtrength, they ſhall mount with wings, as Eagles: they ſhall run and not be weary, and they ſhall walk and not faint*, *Iſa.* 40. 31. For whereas a *ſcoffing Iſhmael*, and the men of this world, do imagine, or ſay, We do not like this kind of work, which is never done; but our God, through his moſt gracious and bountiful Nature, and Doings, hath ſo provided, that his Servants ſhall not be weary in his Work, and have a good will therein, ſignified by that Phraſe of *Running*. And if at any time there ſhould be any wearineſs, becauſe they are here in the Body, and in this Fleſh, then they ſhall *renew their ſtrength*; for *He giveth Power to the faint*; *and to them that have no might he increaſeth ſtrength*. As he doth that, ſo where he ſees any thing is wanting, or neceſſary,

ceſſary, he makes it up, and ſupplies it. So it is in the aforecited place of *Hoſea*, where he ſees before-hand their Failing and Declination, that their Goodneſs is as the Morning Cloud, and as as the Early Dew it paſſeth away: How is this to be remedied, *O Ephraim, what ſhall I do unto thee? O Judah, what ſhall I do unto thee?* Here God asks Queſtions of his Creatures, as if Himſelf were at a Loſs, or a ſtand. God here ſpeaks after the manner of men. It is much Lord that thou ſhouldeſt ask ſuch a Queſtion; for thou thy ſelf knoweſt better than *Ephraim* or *Judah*, or all the Reaſonable Inhabitants of the Earth, what thou ſhalt do unto them, and what is proper unto them in ſuch a caſe or condition. Seeing that their Goodneſs is as the Morning Cloud, and as the Early Dew it paſſeth away, God hath provided an help meet and Remedy for that, for a Repair of that Breach, even the Preaching and Hearing of his Word (which is one Principal Ordinance of Religion) Hereby intimating, that if that will will not do, nothing will do; but it will do. And that this was in the mind of God, and that it was the very thing which he would do unto them, and he thought of when he asked the foregoing Queſtion, is manifeſt by the words immediately following; *Therefore* (here comes the Reaſon and Cauſe for it) *have I hewed them by my Prophets, I have ſlain them by the words of my mouth, and thy Judgments are as the Light that goeth forth, Hoſ. 6. 5.* Where, by the way, *Judgments* may be underſtood for his Commandments, according as *David* doth ſo call them in the 119*th Pſalm*; or rather for his Temporal Judgments on the Earth; and then the ſenſe is to this purpoſe, That to help, remedy, and provide againſt their Goodneſs being as the Morning Cloud, and as the Early Dew it paſſeth away, God hath adapted the Preaching of his Word, ſignified by his hewing them by his Prophets, who were the Perſons and Inſtruments employed therein; and alſo his Judgments abroad in the Earth, that *the Inhabitants thereof may learn Righteouſneſs.* For God would have, and ſo would do any thing, that the Goodneſs of his people might continue, and not paſs away. Though here again, that Goodneſs which is as the Morning Cloud, and as the Early Dew it goeth away, is better than no

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Goodneſs at all, as ſome Dew is better than none; for this Dew, if it is repeated, and ſucceeds daily, will do good.

Therefore have I hewed them by my Prophets, I have ſlain them by the words of my mouth. Here obſerve the manner of the Holy Ghoſt expreſſing it. God hath made a thorough Work of it, *I have hewed, I have ſlain*: For there is a manifeſt Diverſity between that Authoritative and Powerful Preaching of thoſe Prophets, and the flat and inſipid Diſcourſes of our modern Scribes and Declaimers, or of Ignorant and Unfaithful Teachers. *Chriſt taught as one having Authority, and not as the Scribes.* As to this, the Rule is certain, That amongſt all that great deal of Preaching which is now abroad in this Nation, that is the beſt Preaching, and moſt from God, which hath in it moſt Authority, Power and Livelineſs; for his Word is a Lively Word, and ſo it will approve it ſelf to the Conſciences of the Hearers, where it is underſtood and managed aright.

In the work of Man's Converſion and Salvation, the Word, and the Preaching thereof are before Prayer. For how ſhall they Pray, for what they have not known, or for what they have not heard? Now in order to bring God and the things pertaining to his Kingdom, to their Knowledge, as to which hearing or reading is an outward Gate letting in thereto; both the Word and the Preaching or ſpeaking thereof, is not only requiſite, but abſolutely and ſimply neceſſary. And therefore by the way, it would be a good method in the Education of Children, to inſtruct them with ſome Principles of the Knowledge of God and of the Doctrine of Chriſt, and of the things contained in the Scripture according as their tender Years will bear, as the ſmall Rain upon the tender Graſs: Before they are taught to ſay Prayers meerly by rote, or at leaſt to ingraft into them ſome inward ſenſe and underſtanding of their own, what they ſay therein. In thoſe of Riper Years, Knowledge and Underſtanding ſhould go before Action, or otherwiſe it will be blind and ſignify nothing, or not much: Some having conſtantly uſed a Courſe of Devotion, confine themſelves barely to that, as ſuch is all the Religion, or more properly ſuperſtition of the Papiſts, as alſo

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of many Formaliſts of the National Church. Which Devotion, or Prayer, is but a means to ſomewhat more, even for Grace and Strength to the keeping the Commandments of God, and to *confirm all the words of his Law to do them*, (as to which Preaching doth inſtruct and exhort) unto which they ſhould ſtill preſs forward. But in no wiſe, as the manner of them is to neglect the needful thing, and principal End of that, only for adhering to a parcel of outward and cuſtomary Prayers; for ſo I phraſe it; not to vilify or contemn the Ordinance of Prayer; in no wiſe; far be it from me. But only to expreſs it according as it is by them uſed and made. As alſo to let ye ſee on one hand, how the Wiſdom of God hath appointed theſe two Ordinances of Preaching and Prayer, towards the help and furtherance of the Salvation of Mankind; and *what God hath Joyned together, let no Man put aſunder*; for he hath commanded them both, and they may be ſucceſſively uſed one after another. So on the other hand, when froward and diſobedient Man would notwithſtanding put them aſunder, and neglect the one and hold to the other, then comes in Satan, and ſtrangely befools and deceives people therein. As the Apoſtle *James* argues, *For as the Body without the Spirit is dead, ſo Faith without Works is dead alſo*; even ſo here it is. If one ſhould uſe a Courſe of Prayer every Evening, Morning and Noon-day, whether it be private, Family, or publick Worſhip, without keeping the Commandments of God, or having regard to them in all things, and at all times; This would be as Ridiculous, Fooliſh, and Nonſenſical, as if a Servant ſhould as often come to thee for aid and aſſiſtance, or for Tools and Inſtruments to do ſuch a Work, and yet never ſet about the doing of it. So again, it is a like Folly, Ignorance and Deceivableneſs, to be Hearers of the Word, and not doers of it. *The Fooliſh ſhall not ſtand in thy ſight*, Pſal. 5. 5. From which Scripture of undoubted Truth we are given to underſtand, that they who are fooliſh in matters of Religion ſhall not ſtand in Gods ſight; That is, they ſhall not go to Heaven. And beſides that juſt now here mentioned, they come alſo among the Number of the Fooliſh who remember the Covenant in Baptiſm, and yet

they do not observe it; or only with slight and transient Purposes and Resolutions at that present time, when the words thereof are to *Obediently keep Gods holy will and Commandments, and walk in the same all the days of our Life.* God heareth not sinners, *John* 9. 31. And here in like manner it is alledged out of the Scriptures of Truth, that God is not pleased with the Sacrifice of Fools, neither will He accept thereof. In the Scripture Notion and Apprehension, Fools and Sinners are near the same; for all Sinners are Fools, and also all Fools of their own making, as we commonly say, who were not born Ideots of meer Natural Impotency, are sinners: *In that they being in Honour and Understanding, they abide not.* They do not improve, but rather lose that Knowledge and Reason in which God had Created them; This is a sin and fault of their own in these Creatures, when they do not Trade with their Talent, but become unprofitable. And so when they lose Good and Subject themselves to Evil, as to the future State and Distribution of things, this is properly folly, yea, and folly in the abstract; and in this sence sin and folly are convertible terms. All Sinners are Fools, and all such Fools are Sinners. So Ignorance in Worship, or in the things pertaining to God, this is folly; For let not such an one think that he shall receive any thing from the Lord.

Anothers abuse of a thing doth not take away my rightful use thereof. Because another Person drinks and is drunken, this is no Argument or Reason that I should not drink at all; for I may drink Nevertheless, to quench Thirst or refresh Nature. Yea, I must drink, or I Perish. So it is as to the Ordinances of Religion, tho some abuse them, yet Nevertheless, we may rightly use them; yea, they are as absolutely necessary to carry us through this barren and dry Wilderness of the Earth, unto the Heavenly *Canaan*, as drink is to the Body. Because the *Prayers* of some People do *become Sin*, Psal. 109. 7. This is no Argument why we should not pray at all. But rather we are thence taught *not to regard Iniquity in our hearts, to lift up Holy Hands*, to purify our hearts, *to sanctify our selves when we draw near to God*, and such like. Because too many are hearers of the Word and not doers of it,

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ſhall we therefore like the mixt and ungodly Multitude turn aſide our foot from going to the place of hearing? but rather let us *hear and do it.* According to what our Forefathers Covenanted and Promiſed to God, for themſelves and us, in *Deut.* 5. 27. And if we would inherit the promiſes, we muſt of neceſſity be Children of the Covenant. Becauſe ſome do not know and mind much more therein then the ſprinkling or dipping in Water, or do it in General for cuſtoms ſake, or to make the child or Perſon a Chriſtian as they ſay; we may and ought nevertheleſs to *fulfil all Righteouſneſs,* and to comply with that Commandment of Jeſus Chriſt, *Go and teach all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt.* Retaining the thing, but withal giving moſt heed to the thing ſignified thereby. The like figure whereunto even Baptiſm doth now ſave us, not the putting away the filth of the fleſh, but the Anſwer of a Good Conſcience towards God, by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt, 1 *Pet.* 3. 21. If one is Baptized with outward water, this hinders not, but he may at the very ſame time and afterwards alſo be baptized with the Holy Ghoſt and with Fire; by which laſt is denoted warmth, fervency and zeal in the Service of God. For as *Peter* Anſwered, *Can any Man forbid Water, that theſe ſhould not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghoſt as well as we? and he commanded them to be baptized in the Name of the Lord.* Acts 10. 47, 48. This Text doth as plainly imply as two and three make Five, even according to the common ſence and underſtanding of the ſame Words, without any forced meaning, or even any Interpretation at all, that the having received the Holy Ghoſt or the Holy Spirit, is no ſufficient reaſon and excuſe why they ſhould not at all uſe Water Baptiſm; but it is rather a reaſon that they ſhould uſe it. For *Peter* and *Paul*, and other Miniſters and Servants of God of Old time, who had the Spirit in more meaſure then any now adays (Notwithſtanding all Boaſting and Pretenſions) did baptize with water. I would to God, this were throughly underſtood and conſidered of, by thoſe People commonly called *Quakers.* But they alſo have that humour and diſpoſition, as to be ſtiff-necked and perverſe, and refuſe to hear and hearken unto that part

of the Word of God, which makes againſt their own Imaginations.

The Ordinances are a Part of the Commandments of God, and they are to be uſed out of Obedience and Homage unto him. God commands us to hear his Word, to call on his Name. Chriſt commanded his Diſciples and Followers to baptize and to *do this in remembrance of him.* Theſe two laſt, Baptiſm and the Lords Supper ſeem to come in the place of the two *Jewiſh Ceremonies*, or Ordinances of Circumciſion and the Paſſover; both of which were of Gods immediate Command and Inſtitution. As to the firſt of which, the Apoſtle *Paul* averreth, *Circumciſion is nothing, and Uncircumciſion is nothing but the keeping of the Commandments of God*, 1 Cor. 7. 19. Of which words the meaning ſeems to be to this purpoſe and effect, that is, there is nothing, or no great matter, whither the foreskin of ones fleſh is cut off, or not. There is no great Good or Evil in the thing abſtractedly, whither it be done, or not done. So it would have been, if God had given no Commandment at all concerning it; But God having Superadded and Annexed a Commandment concerning it, *The Soul that is not Circumciſed, ſhall be cut off from his People*; Here it ought to be obſerved and done by the *Jews*, as long as that Diſpenſation did remain among them. Not ſo much for the thing it ſelf, but to *fulfill all Righteouſneſs*, and therein to keep the Commandment of God; which ſame Commandment is now done away and abeliſhed in Chriſt. And therefore it was become indifferent under the Goſpel, as appears by the foregoing verſe and from the Practiſe of *Paul*, who altho' he was not for bringing them back again to Bondage and to Jewiſh Obſervances; yet to pleaſe the *Jews*, as alſo to bring over more Jewiſh Converts; who did retain a Tincture of, and Zeal for the *Moſaical* Inſtitutions, did *Circumciſe Timothy*, but would not do ſo as to the Gentiles which ſhould receive the Faith. Now the reaſon is alike and eternally the ſame, as to thoſe two Ordinances of Chriſt, Baptiſm and the Lords Supper. As to ſprinkling or dipping in water, and in Eating and Drinking a little Bread and Wine, there is nothing or no great matter in them taken abſtractedly. The Reaſon of Man is apt to deſpiſe them, becauſe

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it presently sees no Intrinsick Goodness in using them, and no Evil in letting them alone. And so far it would have been true, if Christ had given no Commandment concerning them. But Christ and his Apostles having given Commandment for the once observance of the one, and the often observance of the other, they ought accordingly to be so observed by his Disciples and Followers, to fulfill all Gospel Righteousness, and out of obedience unto, and for keeping the Commandments of Christ. *Moses therefore gave unto you Circumcision (not because it is of* Moses, *but of the Fathers) and ye on the Sabbath Day Circumcise a Man, that the Law of* Moses *shall not be broken*, John 7. 22, 23. This is plain and obvious enough, and accordingly they have been retained all along down in the Christian, yea, and the Reformed Churches. Tho' we cannot here presently assign how Baptism and the Lords Supper are means of Grace, as Preaching the Word and Prayer manifestly and sensibly are. For we know feelingly and experimentally, that Preaching the Word and Prayer are as two Conduit Pipes, through which *Good and Perfect Gifts do come down from above, from the Father of Lights into our Souls.* And we very well conceive how these help to make a People prepared for the Lord. But we cannot altogether give so clear an Account concerning Baptism and the Lords Supper, how they do this, altho' here we can somewhat apprehend as to the things signified by them, which hath been afore-mentioned. Nevertheless, because Christ hath Commanded and Instituted them in his Gospel, it is not only the safer way to use them, but I will go on to add, there can be no safety in neglecting them, or in the omission of them, because of what himself saith, *Whosoever shall break one of these least Commandments and teach Men so, He shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven*, Mat. 5. 19. Which there signifies the Dispensation of his Gospel. For we are not sure, that such will ever be admitted into his Kingdom above at the end of time. Having afore-mentioned what Grounds we have for the same in the Scriptures of Truth; and therefore these things, keep still unto the Ordinances of Religion, *We teach and affirm constantly.*

We read in *Isa.* 58. 2. Of the *Ordinances of Justice*, but in our present and intended Discourse, we wave and let alone all that, it being not altogether so pertinent to the matter in Hand, which is the keeping constantly unto the Ordinances of Worship. For it is a great Gospel Command, *Worship God*, Rev. 22. 9. And to allude unto *Heb.* 9. 1. *This Second Covenant hath Ordinances of Divine Service, and a Spiritual or Heavenly Sanctuary*, Which may be performed in a true and right manner. So that it is meet, requisite and necessary, *That the Children of thy Servants should continue therein*, Psal. 102. 28. Or otherwise, they are no longer Servants of God. *For his Servants shall serve him*, Rev. 22. 3. And as anothers abuse of a thing should not take away my Good and Right use thereof. So here again it is, the Controversies and Questions which are among the Servants of God, concerning the manner or Circumstantials of his Worship, or of those positive Ordinances, as whither Baptism should be observed in Infancy or Riper Years, with dipping, or sprinkling, with the sign of the Cross, or without it, and of the Lords Supper, whither it should be received, sitting, standing, or kneeling, or whither in the Morning, or Afternoon, altho' these are somewhat apt to perplex and trouble the Minds of Christians, and are the occasion of different and distinct Congregations; Yet we should in no wise so far stumble, as to surcease the use of them at all. God forbid.

By the way, tho' we ought to assert the Truth and Confute Errour, yet it is no Christianity to Reproach, or Malign any Sect or Party. *For the Servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all Men, in Meekness Instructing those that oppose themselves, if Peradventure God will give them Repentance to the acknowledgment of the Truth.*

The much greater Part of those Churches, which are reformed from the Idolatry and Superstition of *Rome*, both in these and also in Forreign Countries, do all unanimously agree, that these Ordinances ought by all means to be retained, and that the neglect, or omission of them is Sin. Certain it is, that the best and wisest way for every one is, To keep unto and observe them, as near according to the Rule and Direction of Scripture as ever they can, and abstracted

ſtracted from all will Worſhip and Inſtitution, or Precept of Man.

I am now going to ſpeak *after my Judgment*, and by *Permiſſion and not of Commandment*; And therefore ye may weigh in your Minds, but not rely on this Affirmation, or rather Opinion, *Viz.* That as the Early Dew which goeth away, is better then no Dew at all. So the obſervance of the ordinances any of the ways afore-mentioned, ſeems according to my ſentiment of things, to be better and ſafer then the not obſervance of them at all. Becauſe there is a Commandment of God and of Chriſt, for the actual obſervance of them. Tho' here I charge ye all in the Name of God and of Chriſt (and here ye are to take notice of it, that *I ſpeak again by Commandment*) ſeeing that theſe poſitive ordinances ſerve alſo unto the example and ſhadow of Heavenly things, ſee well to it, that ye do obſerve and uſe them, *according to the Pattern ſhewed* unto ye in the Goſpel: For that is moſt pleaſing unto the Lord, as may be underſtood from *Heb.* 8. 5.

Coloſ. 2. 20. is commonly objected againſt the uſe of ordinances at all. *Wherefore if ye be dead with Chriſt from the Rudiments of the World, why as tho' living in the World are ye ſubject to ordinances?* But it is manifeſt from what goes before, and follows after that Text in this very ſame Chapter, the Apoſtle *Paul* there means only Jewiſh Ordinances, and ſuch *Ordinances as Periſh in the uſing after the Commandments and Doctrines of Men*, But have no Ground or Warrant from the Goſpel of Chriſt. But the *being buried* with him in Baptiſm, or the keeping the Feaſt in *Remembrance of him till he comes*, do not Periſh in the uſing; for they have a Relation to ſomewhat further, neither are they after the Commandments and Doctrines of Men, but after the Commandments and Doctrines of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

Thus ye have been taught, and ye have heard the *Truth as it is in Jeſus*. Remember this Rule and Direction which I *Richard Stafford*, whilſt a Preacher among ye, did make known and preſs and inculcate unto ye over and over, That ye may obſerve it continually when I am gone, *Viz.* For Gods ſake, and for your own Souls ſake, If ye would make a continuing and perſevering work of it, keep ſtill

and constantly unto the ordinances of Religion. I say and testify again, keep still and constantly unto the Ordinances of Religion.

By the way, Do not think this reciting my Name to you to be odd and unbecoming; for as the Apostle doth several times mention himself by Name in his Epistles, I *Paul do testify, I Paul the Aged.* In like manner I do imitate the same Example, I such an one, a Lame Person (which will be a further sign and token) do so express it on purpose to make a greater and more lasting Impression in your Memories. Remember and obey this saying, keep still unto the Ordinances of Religion.

But as it is written, *We will give our selves continually to Prayer, and to the Ministry of the Word*, Acts 6. 4. So here take this further advice and direction, be sure especially to keep still and constantly unto these two ordinances of Religion, *Give your selves continually unto Prayer.* And because all are not Apostles, and all are not Ministers, do ye also continually attend upon the hearing of the Ministry of the Word. Whatever ye neglect, do not neglect these two; for these are confessed, acknowledged and agreed unto by all that Name the *Name of Jesus Christ in every place, both theirs and ours.* Even they who pretend to be above ordinances, and to cast off ordinances (that they do err and are deceived herein, hath been made known from the Scriptures of Truth; as God himself will yet more clearly Judge and Determine at the last day) do still keep amongst them in their Congregations, the Ministry of the Word and Prayer. It is possible to *Pray without ceasing*, and to *continue in Prayer*, and to give your selves continually unto Prayer (Good God! How much dost thou delight that thy Servants should continue, see *James* 1. 25. As appears from mentioning it so very often in thy Word) by secret and mental Prayer, by having your Souls always in a frame and disposition to Pray, by praying in the Assembly of the upright, where only Christians are gathered together, and by Praying in the Congregation. Where tho' there may be a mixt Multitude of Saints and Sinners, yet thy Prayers of Faith, and thy lifting up holy hands, will find acceptance with God for all that. Give your selves continually to attend upon

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the hearing of the Miniſtry of the Word. Go unto, and frequent conſtantly the place when and where it is Preached.

Loſe no opportunity. Ye can hardly conceive how much I have been vexed and troubled in mind at my doing things by halves, or by my loſing opportunities in Temporal and Wordly concerns. For theſe opportunities ſlip by, and often cannot be retrieved. But where they may be retrieved, it is always with expence of more time and labour; all which had been ſaved, if the thing had been throughly done the firſt time. And I ſomewhat knowing the worth of time, the gliding away of time, and the Irrecoverableneſs of time, there is nothing which I ſo much grudge at, as the loſs of time. It is a Maxim and Rule of Prudence and Wiſdom in things pertaining to this preſent Life, *To loſe no opportunities.* But be ſure to lay hold on, and make the moſt of every opportunity. Much more it is Godly diſcretion and ſoul ſaving wiſdom to loſe no opportunity, but to lay hold of, and make the moſt of every opportunity in Spiritual and Eternal concerns. *As we have opportunity, let us do Good unto all Men.*

People ſhould not grudge and think much when they ſee a Poor Man, or as *Jobs* Phraſe is, *Not turn away their Eyes from a Poor Man.* But rather be glad and give God thanks for putting an opportunity into their hands, that they may do good unto him, and lay in more Foundation for their own future reward. For as the Lord Jeſus ſaid, *It is more Bleſſed to give then to receive.* So it is a certain Truth, they that give Alms, have more reaſon to give God thanks then they that receive Alms, for a twofold Reaſon, becauſe God hath placed them in ſuch a condition, whereby they are enabled to give Alms; and alſo becauſe he hath promiſed a future Recompence for the ſame and he will repay it. In which laſt reſpect they are more beholden to the Poor Man, or Beggar in receiving it from them, then he is beholden unto them for giving to him; which ſhould teach thee to prevent him in thy Almſgiving, even before he asks for it, for this is the beſt ſort, as alſo to loſe no opportunity for the ſame according to thine ability.

Loſe

Loſe no opportunity in any Godly or Chriſtian Duty: *I charge thee before God and before the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall Judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his Kingdom: Preach the Word, be inſtant in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon,* 2 Tim. 4: 1. Under this is included a charge to the People, to hear the word alſo in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon. It is altogether as proper to hear or Preach the Word upon a Week Day, as well as on a Sabbath Day. It is equally your Duty to redeem two or three hours, from the work of your calling for to attend on the ſame. Countrey People will riſe at one or two a Clock in a Morning to go to Markets, to remote and diſtant places, to get a Shilling or Eighteen Pence more then Ordinary. This ſame is a Leſſon and Inſtruction, and God doth expect a like of his Creatures, that ye ſhould riſe up a little Earlier in the Morning, and ſit down later at Night, and only be a little more Temperate in your Eating and Drinking, for too much Eating makes People ſluggiſh and ſleepy. Thus People might redeem time for hearing his word on a Week Day; and yet they would not diminiſh ought from their accuſtomed Work, and Labour in their wordly calling.

Sirs, ye know not what it is to loſe opportunities in Spiritual and Eternal concerns. For theſe opportunities can never be retrieved again. As *Nebuchadnezzar* ſaid concerning his Dream, *The thing is gone from me*, Dan. 2. 5. So theſe opportunities of hearing his word are gone from them for all Eternity. There is no recalling of it back again. I have Preached Ten Sermons to the Inhabitants of a certain Town and Neighbourhood; But if thoſe People, who refuſed or neglected to hear the ſame, would now give Ten Thouſand Pounds (and if there were Ten Divine Truths in them, they would not be thus overrated, for each Divine Truth is of more worth then a World) for to have heard them on thoſe Ten paſt Lords Days, this can no more be, then any of them can make the Sun ſtand ſtill, or go back ten degrees in the Dial of *Ahaz*. It paſſes over into a thing to be Judged off, at the Judgment of the Great Day. As God commanded *Moſes* to make a return, how he had diſcharged his meſſage, and *Moſes* did accordingly *return back the Word of the People*

unto

unto the Lord. So when his Miniſters come to give in an Account of their Miniſtry, it will be a ſad reckoning to the People, *They are turned back to the iniquity of their Forefathers, which refuſed to hear my Words,* Jer. 11. 11. Loe, theſe ten opportunities together, ſuch and ſuch People hereabouts have refuſed to hear thy Words, O God; and if I ſhould live or ſtay among them ſo long, I do really believe that ſome of my Countrymen and Neighbours will, for ſeventy times ſeven opportunities more refuſe to hear thy Words O Lord, according as I have received the ſame from the lively Oracles, the Book of the Lord, and what he makes known to my heart by his Spirit.

As *Herod* made a ſudden Oath for the ſake of which, he cut off *John* Baptiſts Head. And as the *Jews* bound themſelves with a Curſe, not to Eat or Drink until they had killed *Paul*: So I believe that ſome have made ſuch an haſty Vow and Reſolution (which is the uſual forerunner of fooliſh and ſinful doings) that they will never go to hear ſuch an one. In ſpeaking after that manner they take the wrong end of the Staff by the hand (which kind of ſpeaking, is one method or deviſe whereby Satan upholds his Kingdom, by fixing on Perſons and not on things) for 'tis not ſo much the Perſon of this or that Man, we being Creatures of alike Fleſh and Blood and of the ſame Paſſions. For they ſhould ſpeak more properly and underſtandingly, they vow and reſolve never to hear the Word of the Lord which comes out of ſuch an ones Mouth (for by the way, if a Great Truth of God could and did come out of *Caiaphas* his Mouth, (as it did in *John* 11.51, 52.) Who had given wicked Counſel, ſo may ſome Truths of God proceed through him, who is harmleſs and inoffenſive in his Converſation, and whom neither his adverſaries can charge with, nor yet himſelf is conſcious of any known and allowed ſin. But here the children of God ſhould *ſeparate the Precious from the Vile.* I would ask ſuch who think that they muſt keep to their Vows. Suppoſe that a man ſhould Vow, that he would never worſhip God, ſuch an Unlawful Vow or Promiſe, is better broken than kept; and ſo it is near the ſame, not to go to hear the Word; for thou ſhouldeſt here Repent

of

of making such a Vow or Resolution, the Observance whereof being unlawful serves only a design of the Devil, to keep thee in the breach and neglect of a Commandment of God, to *hear his Word*; as also it hinders thy Soul from good things. If any should stay at home to Read the Sctiptures, or for Family Prayer, or to catechise and instruct their Children, this they might do at other times, and they might bring their Children here to sit down and hear Words Preached according to their Capacities; which perhaps by Reason of their fresh Memories, and tender Years, they would retain longer than their Parents. It may be asked them another day, Why abodest thou among thy Family, or in thy house, when thou mightest have gone out to Hear the word of the Lord? *Hearken unto me ye that know Righteousness, the people in whose heart is my Law; fear ye not the Reproach of Men, neither be ye afraid of their Revilings*, Isa. 51. 7.

Ye may all know and be assured, that the works of God are never in vain. I have several times thought as to my outward Lameness, tho I do halt like unto the Patriarch *Jacob*, nevertheless this hinders not from my running the way of Gods Commandments. And so where God hath furnished any man with Knowledge, Ability, Inward Indowments, and Qualifications, and hath *put good words and true words into his heart*, all this, and such like must be for some end; even for him to speak out and make known the same, and for others to hear and receive them. The Lord will rehearse all this, and much more in the day when he writeth up his people, How every least and most contemptible Creature, did serve the Great Ends of his Glory. But much more the Ministers of the Word do so in their several Generations, Countries and Places. It is indeed matter of Anguish and Vexation to us, because we see the Devils working and Delusion herein, and we can not help it so throughly and universally as we would. *It is a day of trouble, the Children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth.* Altho' there are too many Loyterers in the Ministry, yet there are not Labourers enough in the Harvest; and they also are not knowing, or not laborious enough. But yet, however people carry it towards us, yet that place of *Ezek.* 2. 5, 7.

will

will take hold of them; *And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear (for they are a rebellious House), yet shall know that there hath been a Prophet among them. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, for they are most Rebellious.* And so accordingly, as long as I have health and opportunity, I will speak the word of God unto the people of my Generation and Nation, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, if no more than two or three only did come to this particular place where it is declared. *But to Israel he saith, All the day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gain-saying people, Rom.* 10. 21. Now *Israel* were the outward worshippers; but the same holds true also as to the sinners and ungodly.

But Beloved, we are perswaded better things of you, and things which accompany Salvation, tho we thus speak. For some of ye will hear, and will not be disobedient, nor yet gain-saying. *And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of Hope unto the end;* Seeing that our selves are determined by his Grace, the longest day we have to live here on the Earth, to give our *selves continually to Prayer and to the Ministry of the Word.* See ye to it also, that ye give your selues continually to Prayer likewise, and to attend upon this Ministry of the Word.

As *Agrippa* and *Bernice did come with great Pomp to the place of hearing*, so do ye lose no opportunity to come with great Reverence, Attention, and a Spirit of Discerning, unto the place of hearing, wherever it is faithfully and skilfully Preached forth and handled. They *came with great Pomp.* But do not Refuse to come to any place for the seeming outward meanness and contemptibleness thereof; for as it is the same Sun which shines upon a Dunghill as upon a Beautiful Palace; as Christ, according to the flesh, was laid in the Manger of a Stable, so the word of God, and the words of Eternal Life may be, and are often more purely and simply declared in ordinary Rooms, than in finer Buildings. Let it meet with Reception in your hearts. Remember the word which I have inculcated over and over unto ye, which doing, altho some may think superfluous, yet to ye it is safe. For the Lords

sake,

ſake, and for your own Souls ſake, if ye would indeed make a continuing and perſevering work of it, keep ſtill and conſtantly unto the Ordinances of Religion. But above all, and eſpecially, give your ſelves continually unto Prayer, and to attend upon the Miniſtry of the word, that ye loſe no opportunity for hearing the ſame. *He that hath my word, let him ſpeak my word faithfully, Jer.* 23. 28. And in whatever place it is faithfully ſpoken, and faithfully preached, *even unto his Habitation ſhalt thou ſeek, and thither ſhalt thou come, Deut.* 12. 5.

FINIS.

Another Admonition to the People commonly call'd QUAKERS.

THere are ſome in theſe days, who think and ſay, that all Sermons and Exhortations to abſtain from ſin, whither ſecret or open, is but a low degree of the Miniſtration of the Goſpel; and they are apt to Boaſt that they do Preſs further and arrive at higher attainments. I wiſh they did all ſpeak Truth herein, for there are ſundry other ſins beſides Drunkenneſs, Adultery, and the *Manifeſt Works of the Fleſh*; and it were well if themſelves were purified from all them alſo, eſpecially from *hatred, variance, emulations, ſtrife, hereſies, envyings*; and alſo from all the Perverſities and Evils of the Spirit. This I confeſs as well as they, that to go on to ſin and to confeſs, confeſs and ſin, and ſo to return again to Folly, (*I will hear what God the Lord will ſay, for he will ſpeak Peace unto his People and to his Saints, but let them not turn again to Folly*, Pſal. 85. 8.) This will never do as to the ſaving of the Soul, and that it may be received up into Glory. But this is the manner of ſuch Wordly outward Worſhippers, who are *Fooliſh, Diſobedient and Deceived, ſerving Divers Luſts and Pleaſures*, Titus 3. 3. And ſo where any Preachers or Miniſters do lead, or allow People in ſin, but they

they do not ſhew the way how they may be led out of ſin, there they *do not profit the People at all.* For that is the ſaving and effectual Miniſtry, which actually turns People *from Darkneſs unto Light, from the Power of Satan unto God.* Nevertheleſs where this is done, it is neceſſary to make mention of Sin, Evil, Iniquity and Tranſgreſſion, to warn and arm the Minds of People againſt the ſame alſo. Accordingly *Moſes* and the Prophets, Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and all the Holy Men of God who were moved by the Holy Ghoſt, whoſe Words and Writings are upon record in the Book of the Lord, did ſpeak of and teſtify againſt ſin. But ſome in theſe days, *who think of themſelves more highly then they ought to think,* Rom. 12. 3. *Be not wiſe in your own Conceits,* ver. 16. Do imagine that themſelves are more Pure and Spiritual minded, and have attained further then to make mention of Sin and Tranſgreſſion within their Lips. And tho' *David, Ezra, Nehemiah, Job, Daniel,* and *Iſaiah,* in thoſe Prayers of their own, which are left upon record in the lively Oracles, and had as much, yea, more of the Spirit of the Lord then any in theſe days, do all make Confeſſion of, and ask Pardon for their Sin and of the other Servants of God. It is both a Pattern, and alſo a ſtanding poſitive and expreſs Commandment, which our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, even under the Goſpel diſpenſation hath given unto all his Diſciples and Followers; *When ye pray, ſay, and forgive us our ſins,* Luk. 11. 2, 4. And it is again affirmed in the ſame Goſpel, *If we ſay, that we have no ſin, we deceive our ſelves, and the Truth is not in us. But if we confeſs our ſins, he is faithful and juſt to forgive us our ſins and to cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs,* 1 John 1. 8, 9. But I have went ſeveral times to the Congregations of thoſe aforenamed, and *beheld their Devotions,* Acts 17. 23. And obſerved them, and I never therein heard the leaſt Confeſſion of ſin to Almighty God, nor yet asking any forgiveneſs of him for the ſame. Whereupon, I can aſſuredly gather and conclude, *That they do deceive themſelves and the Truth is not in them, as to that matter.* And by my Publiſhing theſe things to the People of this my Generation and Countrey, I would hereby warn and deſire them to take heed, leaſt what God ſaid to the two Friends of *Job*

come upon them alſo, *Viz. Leaſt he deal with them after their Folly*, Job 42. 8. In that whereas he had commanded and directed all that worſhip him, to confeſs and be ſorry for, and forſake their ſin (*He that confeſſeth and forſaketh ſhall find mercy*) and alſo to offer up for themſelves a Prayer unto God for forgiveneſs of the ſame. But they did not, nor would not (whither it was out of Spiritual Pride or the Errour of their own heart, God knows) and ſo their ſin is not forgiven, nor blotted out, and then the Lord doth not accept them. And if ſo, then the Religion of that People is vain, and it ſignifieth and availeth not to find acceptance, or receive any thing from the Lord.

Indeed, herein they have *ſpoken the thing that is right*; It availeth not to Worſhip God, and at the ſame time to continue in Sin and Tranſgreſſion; or to confeſs Sin, and not forſake it. For this will no more bring to Heaven, than only to ſet ones Foot only on the Threſhold, and no further, is Actual Entring into the Houſe. In no wiſe. But they, and they only are *Bleſſed that do his Commandments, that they may have Right unto the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the Gates, into the City*, *Rev.* 22. 14. Such do not always ſtand at, or in *the Gates*. Which *Doing of his Commandments*, ſpeaks and requires on this wiſe, *Put away the Evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes; Ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well*, *Iſaiah* 1. 16, 17.

FINIS.